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NBC NIGHTLY NEWS
20 July 1984

NICARAGUA/U.S./ BROKAW: Tonight, the Nicaragua connection, a drug connection. So often the Reagan administration has accused the Sandinista government of exporting revolution. Well, this week it accused the regime of exporting cocaine to the United States. Brian Ross has been investigating.

DRUGS

ROSS: Three weeks ago in Miami, it was big news when police investigating a minor traffic accident discovered more than \$20 million worth of cocaine hidden in the back of a motor home. What wasn't reported that night was that the big seizure was really part of an operation by the CIA and the Drug Enforcement Administration. The motor home was deliberately hit by a car driven by a federal agent so that the people who shipped in the cocaine would blame a freak traffic accident for the loss of the cocaine and not suspect that federal agents were on to their operation. Federal authorities said the people who shipped the cocaine to Miami operate here at a restricted military area of the airport in Managua, Nicaragua, which authorities say has been used since 1982 as a staging area for huge shipments of cocaine. And federal authorities say two top men in the Sandinista government are behind the cocaine shipments. Interior Minister Tomas *Vorja and Defense Minister Umberto Ortega, shown here saluting (film clip of Ortega). The Sandinistas have denied the allegations. But authorities say the CIA and the DEA use this spy plane and an informant to pick up cocaine at the Managua airport and that cameras hidden in the plane's wing took pictures of Sandinista soldiers loading cocaine. Authorities say there were plans to use the spy plane to lure the South American and Sandinista smugglers to Miami, but that the top-secret investigation was compromised. First, General Paul *Gorman, the commander of the American forces in Latin America, made reference to it in a speech in Central America. GEN.\PAUL*GORMAN: ...commandantes in Nicaragua are deeply involved in these illegal movements.

ROSS: And then, according to federal authorities, the White House and the CIA leaked the story to discredit the Sandinistas just before the anniversary this week of the Sandinista revolution. With the undercover investigation blown, federal agents could round up only a few of the alleged members of the Managua-to-Miami drug ring, the underlings, not the bosses. Law enforcement authorities here and in Washington say that what appeared to be a very promising cocaine smuggling investigation was sacrificed for a week's worth of propaganda against the Sandinistas. Brian Ross, NBC News, Miami.